

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A television set-top box, comprising:

— a tuner for receiving signals representing television programming and delivering the signals representing television programming to a display interface;

— a central processor;

— a bar code reader, operatively coupled to the central processor, to read bar codes, wherein the bar codes represent product identifying information;

— program means, running on the central processor, for receiving bar code information from the bar code reader;

— a communication device, operatively coupled to the central processor, suitable for sending and receiving data over a communication medium;

— wherein the program means communicates with the communication device to send information obtained from the bar code reader to a server residing at a television service provider headend in order to register the product with a plurality of vendors subscribing to a product registration service provided by the television service provider, and

— wherein the television service provider server associates the product with a plurality of vendors, receives data from the vendors associated with the product and sends the data associated with the product to the communication device.

a display interface;

a tuner for receiving signals representing television programming from a television service provider and for delivering the signals representing television programming to the display interface;

a central processor;

a bar code reader, operatively coupled to the central processor, to read a product identifier in the form of a bar code, wherein the product identifier identifies a product;

wherein the television set top box has an identity;

a communication device, operatively coupled to the central processor, for sending the product identifier and the television set top box identity to a server residing

at a television service provider headend, and further for receiving data from the server residing at the television service provider headend;

program means, running on the central processor, for receiving the product identifier from the bar code reader and sending the product identifier and the television set top box identity to the server residing at the television service provider headend via the communication device to thereby associate the product identifier with the television set top box identity;

wherein a plurality of vendors subscribe to a product registration service provided by the television service provider in which each of the plurality of vendors specify at least one of a plurality of categories of products;

wherein, the television service provider matches the product identifier with at least a first category of the plurality of categories of products;

wherein the television service provider sends data representing the product identifier and the television set top box identity to at least one of the plurality of vendors specifying the category of products;

wherein the television service provider server receives data from each of the vendors specifying the category of products, wherein the data are associated with the category of products; and

wherein the television service provider sends the data associated with the category of products received from the at least one of the vendors to the television set top box via the communication device.

2. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 1, ~~wherein the television service provider provides an alias address to the vendors, wherein the television set top box identity comprises an alias address that is associated with the set-top box.~~

3. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 2, further comprising means for receiving messages addressed to the alias address.

4. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising

means for rejecting messages directed to the alias address.

5. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the data received from the service provider comprises offers for products or services associated with the category of products bar code.

6. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the data received from the service provider comprises uses for the product associated with the product identifier a product associated with the bar code.

7. (Previously Presented) A method of obtaining quotes, comprising:

- at a set-top box, submitting a request for quote (RFQ) to a television service provider headend, the television service provider headend having a quote server;
- at the service provider headend quote server, correlating the RFQ with a plurality of vendors;
- at the service provider headend quote server, resubmitting the RFQ to the plurality of vendors;
- at the service provider headend quote server, receiving a plurality of quotes from vendors; and
- at the service provider headend quote server, forwarding the quotes to the set-top box for communication to a subscriber.

8. (Original) The method according to claim 7, further comprising, at the set-top box sending a message to the service provider to accept a quote from one of the plurality of vendors.

9. (Original) The method according to claim 8, further comprising, at the service provider, notifying the one of the plurality of vendors of the acceptance of the quote and of the identity of the subscriber.

10. (Original) The method according to claim 7, wherein the submitting is carried out by navigating a hierarchical menu system to identify a product or service required, and submitting the RFQ from the menu system.

11. (Original) The method according to claim 10, wherein the menu system comprises selections for obtaining quotes, registering products and obtaining information.

12. (Original) The method according to claim 7, wherein the subscriber is identified to vendors at the time of submission of the RFQ only by an RFQ identifier.

13. (Original) The method according to claim 7, further comprising charging a subscription fee to the subscriber to permit submission of the RFQ.

14. (Original) The method according to claim 7, further comprising charging a per use fee to the subscriber to permit submission of the RFQ.

15. (Original) The method according to claim 7, further comprising charging a subscription fee to the vendors to receive the RFQ.

16. (Original) The method according to claim 7, further comprising charging a per use fee to the vendors to receive the RFQ.

17. (Original) The method according to claim 8, further comprising charging a fee to the vendor receiving the acceptance.

18. (Original) The method according to claim 8, further comprising charging a fee to the subscriber as a result of receiving the acceptance.

19. (Currently Amended) A method of registering a product, comprising:

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at a set-top box, submitting product registration data comprising a product identifier and a set-top box identity to a television service provider;

at the television service provider, entering the product registration data into a database;

at the television service provider, matching the product registration data to product identifier to categories of products submitted by a plurality of vendor registrations submitted by a plurality of vendors who specify categories of products with the television service provider;

at the television service provider, sending the product registration data to a plurality of matching vendors who submitted categories matched by the television service provider to the product identifier;

at the television service provider, receiving a plurality of submissions directed to the television set-top box from the plurality of matching vendors who submitted categories matched by the television service provider to the product identifier; and

forwarding the submissions to the set-top box for communication to a subscriber.

20. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 19, wherein the set-top box identity comprises subscriber is identified to the matching vendors only by an alias.

21. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 19, further comprising filtering advertisements out submissions from for vendors from vendors selected by the subscriber.

22. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 19, further comprising charging a fee to the vendors for specifying categories to the television service provider submitting vendor registrations.

23. (Original) The method according to claim 19, further comprising charging a fee to the vendors for forwarding the submissions.

24. (Original) The method according to claim 19, further comprising charging a fee to the subscriber for submitting product registration data.

25. (Original) The method according to claim 19, further comprising charging a subscription fee to the subscriber to allow submission of product registration data.

26. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 19, wherein the submitting of the product registration data is carried out by navigating a hierarchical menu system to identify a category type of product to be registered, and entering product detail.

27. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 26, wherein the product detail is entered by scanning a product code with a bar code reader operatively coupled to associated with the set-top box, wherein the product code identifies the product.

28. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 19, wherein the submitting of the product registration data is carried out by navigating a hierarchical menu system and entering product detail by scanning a product code with a bar code reader associated with operatively coupled to the set-top box.

29. (Previously Presented) A method of obtaining information, comprising:
at a set-top box, submitting a request for information to a television service provider headend in the form of a product registration;
at the television service provider headend, receiving the request for information, entering the product information into a database residing on a server at the television service provider headend, and transmitting the request for information to a plurality of vendors;
at the television service provider headend, receiving a plurality of vendor submissions supplied in response to the request for information and matching the request for information with the plurality of vendor submissions;

at the television service provider headend, sending product registration data to a plurality of matching vendors, wherein the product registration data identifies the set-top box initiating the request for information by an alias;

at the service provider, receiving a plurality submissions from the plurality of matching vendors;

at the television service provider headend, sending the plurality of vendor submissions to the set-top box for communication to a subscriber; and

at the set-top box transmitting filter information to the television service provider headend, wherein the filter information is used to block subsequent transmissions from a specified vendor.

30. (Original) The method according to claim 29, further comprising charging a fee to the vendors for submitting vendor submissions.

31. (Original) The method according to claim 29, further comprising charging a fee to the vendors for sending the submissions.

32. (Original) The method according to claim 29, further comprising charging a fee to the subscriber for submitting a request for information.

33. (Original) The method according to claim 29, further comprising charging a subscription fee to the subscriber to allow submission of requests for information.

34. (Original) The method according to claim 29, wherein the submitting of request for information is carried out by navigating a hierarchical menu system to identify information desired.

35. (Currently Amended) A television set-top box, comprising:

~~a tuner for receiving signals representing television programming and delivering the signals representing television programming to a display interface;~~

— a central processor;
— a product identification reader, operatively coupled to the central processor, to read a product identifier;
— program means, running on the central processor, for receiving information from the product identification reader;
— a communication device, operatively coupled to the central processor, suitable for sending and receiving data over a communication medium;
— wherein the program means communicates with the communication device to send information obtained from the product identification reader to a server residing at a television service provider headend in order to register the product with a plurality of vendors subscribing to a product registration service provided by the television service provider; and
— wherein the television service provider server associates the product with a plurality of vendors, receives data from the vendors associated with the product and sends the data associated with the product to the communication device.

a display interface;

a tuner for receiving signals representing television programming from a television service provider and for delivering the signals representing television programming to the display interface;

a central processor;

a product identifier reader, operatively coupled to the central processor, to read a product identifier wherein the product identifier identifies a product;

wherein the television set top box has an identity;

a communication device, operatively coupled to the central processor, for sending the product identifier and the television set top box identity to a server residing at a television service provider headend, and further for receiving data from the server residing at the television service provider headend;

program means, running on the central processor, for receiving the product identifier from the bar code reader and sending the product identifier and the television set top box identity to the server residing at the television service provider headend via

the communication device to thereby associate the product identifier with the television set top box identity;

wherein a plurality of vendors subscribe to a product registration service provided by the television service provider in which each of the plurality of vendors specify at least one of a plurality of categories of products;

wherein, the television service provider matches the product identifier with at least a first category of the plurality of categories of products;

wherein the television service provider sends data representing the product identifier and the television set top box identity to at least one of the plurality of vendors specifying the category of products;

wherein the television service provider server receives data from each of the vendors specifying the category of products, wherein the data are associated with the category of products; and

wherein the television service provider sends the data associated with the category of products received from the at least one of the vendors to the television set top box via the communication device.

36. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 35, wherein the television service provider provides an alias address to the vendors, wherein the alias address is associated with the set-top box data representing the television set top box identity sent to the at least one of the plurality of vendors comprises an alias address.

37. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 36, further comprising means for receiving messages addressed to the alias address.

38. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 37, further comprising means for rejecting messages directed to the alias address.

39. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 35, wherein the data received from the service provider comprises offers for products or services

associated with the product identifier.

40. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 35, wherein the data received from the service provider comprises uses for the uses for a product associated with the product identifier.

41. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 35, wherein the product identification identifier reader comprises a bar code reader, and wherein the product identifier comprises a bar code.